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**MASSACHUSETTS STATE PLAN
FOR TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE
FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)**

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Executive Office of Health and Human Services

Department of Transitional Assistance

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SECTION 402 - STATE PLAN REQUIREMENTS

(a)(1) OUTLINE OF THE PROGRAM

(A) General Provisions

This plan provides an outline of how the State will accomplish the following:

(i) Conduct a program, designed to serve all political subdivisions in the State (not necessarily in a uniform manner), that provides assistance to needy families with (or expecting) children and provides parents with job preparation, work and support services to enable them to leave the program and become self-sufficient.

The Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) is the primary agency responsible for administering and supervising Massachusetts' TANF block grant. The primary cash assistance program operated under TANF is the Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) program. The TAFDC program is authorized by the Commonwealth's welfare reform law, Chapter 5 of the Acts of 1995.

In addition, Massachusetts provides eligible low income families with benefits such as employment and training services. By providing these benefits, the state can assist families in improving their economic self-sufficiency and enhancing their ability to support themselves through meaningful employment. Unless otherwise stated within this document, for the purposes of claiming TANF and Maintenance of Effort (MOE) expenditures, Massachusetts defines a needy family as a family with a child or a non-custodial parent whose income does not exceed 85% of the State Median Income. The TAFDC program is described in detail below.

TRANSITIONAL AID TO FAMILIES WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN

TAFDC is the state's cash assistance program for families with dependent children (including pregnant women in their third trimester) with limited assets and income. Massachusetts' goal is to help families achieve economic self-sufficiency through meaningful employment. To this end, the state completes a comprehensive needs assessment of every client, which assesses their employment history, educational attainment and other factors, and to the extent that resources permit, the state develops innovative programs to meet those needs and addresses barriers to work, including providing a variety of educational and training opportunities. When possible, DTA intends to assist individuals in being trained for, gaining and retaining employment in the eldercare workforce. Client volunteers for state-funded educational and training programs receive more in-depth assessments that enable programs to address their individualized needs. Once placed in jobs, families are also eligible for child care to ensure that they are able to maintain their employment and achieve their career goals. Therefore, the TAFDC program in Massachusetts strives to reduce reliance on the traditional welfare system by emphasizing a comprehensive approach to family self-sufficiency.

The eligibility criteria for TAFDC are set in the Code of Massachusetts Regulations (CMR). Assets are considered for eligibility determination as defined in 106 CMR 204.100, while income applied to eligibility determination or review is defined under 106 CMR 204.200. Payment standards for this program can be found in regulation at 106 CMR 204.420 and 425. (The Department's current regulations are available at: <http://www.mass.gov/dta>.)

All of the Department's regulations are promulgated in accordance with the state Administrative Procedures Act (M.G.L., c. 30A), which provides the public with an opportunity for notice, review and comment. The Department's regulations referenced throughout this State plan are subject to change and are available as indicated above. A change to these regulations will result in a state plan amendment only when the State is proposing a substantive change which would: 1) affect the State's compliance with the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act; or 2) implement a State option not previously included in the State's plan.

TAFDC benefits and services are provided to eligible families when the Commonwealth has determined, in accordance with its regulations, that such families reside in Massachusetts, and have dependent children who meet certain relationship requirements. In making determinations of eligibility, the Commonwealth uses fair and equitable standards for considering an applicant's/recipient's income and assets, and determining financial eligibility and benefit amounts. Uniform program policies are implemented statewide, with the exception of any pilot projects implemented by the Department.

Each applicant/recipient is advised of his or her rights and responsibilities. Applicants/recipients are expected to provide verifications of their eligibility, to report all related changes in a timely manner, and to have their eligibility reviewed periodically. They also are required to apply for certain other benefits for which they may qualify and to cooperate in the establishment and collection of support payments and the establishment of third party liability for medical coverage, unless they have good cause for not cooperating.

In accordance with established timeliness standards, determinations of eligibility for benefits are made promptly, and applicants/recipients are notified of eligibility decisions.

Major Provisions of TAFDC

Time limit on benefits: For purposes of determining eligibility for recipients subject to the State's two-year limit on benefits, the Department categorizes recipients as "exempt" or "nonexempt". Generally, exempt recipients are those unable to work because of a disability, the age of their children, or their own age (60 or older). Nonexempt recipients are those who do not have such barriers to obtaining employment. For a more complete listing of the exemption categories, see the Department's current regulations at 106 CMR 203.100. The Department's time limit regulations can be found at 106 CMR 203.200.

Nonexempt TAFDC recipients are limited to 24 months of assistance in a continuous 60-month period, with some exceptions. The time limit may be waived for a dependent child who is no longer able to live with his or her parent(s) if the custody or guardianship of the child has been legally transferred to the other parent or a relative. If this does not apply, a waiver of the time limit may be requested in writing to the Commissioner or the Commissioner's designee, describing the circumstances under which a waiver is being requested, and the Commissioner or designee may extend benefits beyond the 24-month period.

In addition, extensions of the time limit may be granted under certain circumstances. Extensions are short-term and are provided to those who have made a demonstrated effort to meet the participation requirement and/or who are on a pathway to meaningful employment opportunities. Examples include a recipient who: is participating in an education or training activity who needs time (not more than six months) to complete the activity; or is working full-time at minimum wage but earning less money than he or she would receive from TAFDC. In determining whether an extension will be granted, the

Commissioner or designee will also consider the availability of child care and local job opportunities, the recipient's work history, work-related activities in which the recipient has participated, and whether the recipient has cooperated with the Department's rules and regulations. Victims of domestic violence may also receive waivers of the time limit under certain circumstances. These regulations can be found at 106 CMR 203.110.

A recipient who is granted an extension may be required to participate in a subsidized work program. Extension regulations may be found at 106 CMR 203.210.

Benefits to recipients who have exceeded the federal TANF sixty-month limit, but who continue to be eligible under State law, will be included as part of the 20% hardship exception, or funded through the State maintenance of effort provisions.

Work Program Requirements: The work program requirement for a non-exempt TAFDC recipient is dependent upon the age of the youngest child (with certain exceptions) and is as follows: 20 hours per week if the youngest child is age two to mandatory full-time school age; and 30 hours per week if the youngest child is mandatory full-time school age or older. TAFDC recipients can substitute employment with education and/or training that meets the provisions required by 106 CMR 203.400(A)(2). In two-parent households, each parent, unless otherwise exempt, is required to meet the work program requirements based on the age of the youngest child in the family as noted above. The current regulations specifying the Department's work program requirements can be found at 106 CMR 203.400. Waivers of the work program requirements may be granted in cases of domestic violence. The Department's domestic violence regulations may be found at 106 CMR 203.110.

Community Service: Nonexempt recipients subject to the work program requirement, who are not employed for the minimum number of hours per week required under 106 CMR 203.400(A) or who are not substituting work hours with education and/or training that meets the applicable provisions, must participate in community service (or combine work and community service) for the number of hours per week that ensures work/education and/or training program compliance. The Department's current community service regulations can be found at 106 CMR 203.400 and 207.170.

Benefit Reduction: All nonexempt recipients are subject to a 2.75 percent reduction in cash assistance benefits (approximately \$15 per month for a family of three). The Department's current nonexempt need and payment standards can be found at 106 CMR 204.415 and 204.425.

Earned Income Disregards: To provide an incentive to work, families subject to the 2.75 percent benefit reduction are permitted to retain or "disregard" more of their earned income than exempt families when determining eligibility. Nonexempt recipients who work are allowed to retain \$30 plus one-half of their earned income. Exempt recipients may keep \$30 plus one-third of their earned income. Both deductions remain in place as long as a family is employed and eligible. The Department's current earned income disregard regulations can be found at 106 CMR 204.280 and 204.285.

Teen Parents: As a condition of eligibility, parents under the age of 20 must have a high school Diploma or GED, or be in a program to obtain one. Unless they meet the Department's criteria to live independently, these youth must live in the home of a parent or adult relative or, if there is abuse, neglect or substance abuse at home, in a supervised, structured setting through the Department's Teen Living Program, which operates through a partnership with the Department of Children and Families. The capacity available through the Teen Living Program does not currently meet demand, so the Department collaborates with Department of Housing and Community Development to shelter teen

parents through the state's Emergency Assistance (EA) program. The Department's current Teen Parent regulations can be found at 106 CMR 203.600 through 203.640. School attendance may be waived for teen parents who are domestic violence victims. The pertinent regulations may be found at 106 CMR 203.110.

Learnfare/School Attendance: A family with children under the age of 14 may be sanctioned if the child has an excessive number of unexcused absences from school, with certain exceptions. Children 16 years old or older are also required to attend school, with certain exceptions. The Department's current Learnfare and school attendance regulations can be found at 106 CMR 203.900 and 203.560 - 203.575.

Family Cap: Under Massachusetts law, once a recipient is determined eligible for TAFDC, cash benefits are not increased for additional children born to the recipient, with certain exceptions. The Department's current Family Cap regulations can be found at 106 CMR 203.300. The family cap provision may be waived for certain recipients, who are victims of domestic violence or other circumstances via a request to the Department. Please refer to 106 CMR 203.110 for the domestic violence regulations.

Immunization Requirement: With certain exceptions, children in TAFDC families must be immunized or the family's grant may be reduced. The Department's current Immunization regulations can be found at 106 CMR 203.800.

The Employment Services Program (ESP)

The Department's Employment Services Program (ESP) offers a variety of education, skills training, and employment opportunities to clients and DTA, in conjunction with the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), re-procured these services in 2009 through the Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES) procurement. This was a transformational change which aligned the Department's employment programming with the Administration's goals of reducing poverty and generating economic growth. Under the re-procurement, DTA purchased more flexible, provider-designed service packages developed to meet the employment assistance needs of the populations previously served by these programs as well as regional labor force needs.

The Department is focused on assisting our clients to increase their levels of economic self-sufficiency, regardless of whether or not they are required to work. This shift in philosophy requires an emphasis on assessing individual barriers and opportunities, and a commitment to adjusting or developing programs or initiatives designed to meet the needs of particular individuals or groups of clients, specifically those with the greatest barriers including young parents, homeless families and persons with disabilities, limited English proficiency and/or little or no work history.

The following four ESP components were impacted by the CIES procurement:

Employment Ready/Job Search/Job Readiness component: This is a program designed to meet the needs of participants with some work history and no serious barriers to employment. It is designed to help clients adapt to the work environment and to the job search process in a structured and supportive atmosphere. It is geared to serve individuals who have work experience or who are returning to the labor market after an absence of not more than two years. Services include job readiness training, job search support, case management, and job placement.

Employment Education and Training/Skills Training component: This is a program specifically designed to serve clients with minimal barriers to employment. Community-based agencies, schools and other nonprofit organizations provide skills training, education and job placement services to TAFDC recipients via contracts with the Department. The range of services includes initial activities which are predominantly short-term. Clients may then be placed in work sites where they can earn wages.

Employment Supports/Supported Work component: This is a program specifically designed to serve clients with moderate barriers to employment. Clients may be placed in highly supportive work sites where they can earn wages in addition to receiving a reduced TAFDC grant while transitioning into an unsubsidized job.

Enhanced Employment Supports/Vocational Rehabilitation Services component: Vocational Rehabilitation providers work with recipients to reduce barriers and increase employment options through services that are customized for each individual, including assessment, placement and employment supports. This program is specifically designed to serve clients with significant barriers to employment. Clients who have been unable to meet the criteria of other ESP programs or who have been unsuccessful in those programs may be appropriate for the more intensive services offered to obtain and maintain employment.

Additional ESP Activities include:

Young Parents Program (YPP): YPP provides literacy and other skills training to pregnant and/or parenting TAFDC recipients between the ages of 14 and 22, who have not achieved a high school diploma or its equivalent.

Full Employment Program (FEP): FEP is a voluntary program through which recipients are placed in jobs and receive wages in lieu of TAFDC and SNAP benefits. If a recipient's wages are less than he or she would receive in TAFDC and SNAP benefits, then the Department provides a wage supplement.

Volunteer to Succeed/Community Service Program (CSP): CSP provides work experience to TAFDC recipients who are work required and have been unable to find paid employment. The goal of this program is to place recipients in activities that will establish a recent work history and good references through productive working relationships. Participation hours are consistent with the requirements of the Fair Labor Standard Act (FLSA).

GED Testing: In addition to assisting recipients to enter into GED programs, Massachusetts pays GED exam fees for all TAFDC recipients.

English as a Second Language (ESL): ESL is an activity to provide English language education to recipients in order to better prepare them for the workplace.

Distance Learning: Limited to the 15 publicly funded Community Colleges state-wide. Distance Learning refers to video- and or computer-based educational activities available on the Internet.

Transportation Supports to ESP Participants: Transportation supports are provided to TAFDC recipients subject to available funding.

Individual Development Account (IDA) Program for Educational Advancement: Although DTA doesn't sponsor its own IDA program at this time, DTA encourages persons to participate in these programs.

Resource Team Program: The Resource Team provides services to applicants and recipients who have an identified medical or learning disability. In partnership with the University of Massachusetts' Disability Evaluation Services (DES), the team provides services for disability determinations, SSI applications and vocational counseling and provides referrals to education, training and employment, along with extensive case management and follow-up with clients. The team provides a coordinated approach for the review of barriers to employment and for providing support services to clients.

Learning Disabilities (LD) Assessments: This program provides learning disability screenings and assessments of TAFDC recipients, in order to identify barriers to learning and employment.

Other Program Administered By DTA That Meets One of the Four TANF Goals

Supplemental Nutrition Allowance (SNA): This program offers a Supplemental Nutrition Allowance benefit of up to \$10 per month to certain SNAP clients who are not receiving TAFDC. Eligible families whose TAFDC cases close due to earnings or who are currently receiving NPA SNAP benefits only and have an employment status that meets the work participation requirements as outlined in 106 CMR 705.250 will be provided a supplemental nutritional assistance benefit.

Other Programs Not Administered By DTA That Meet One of the Four TANF Goals

DHCD Homeless Coordinators work within DTA local offices to prevent homelessness, ensure access to shelter those for whom homelessness is unavoidable, and rapidly re-house homeless families in stable, permanent housing. DTA continues to work closely with DHCD to assist homeless families as they remain a priority population for the Department.

Emergency Assistance (EA) Shelter Program to TAFDC Families: Administered by DHCD, this program provides temporary emergency shelter to eligible homeless families receiving TAFDC and assists them in finding permanent housing. To be eligible, families must meet both the TAFDC and EA asset limits and gross income standards (130% of the federal poverty level). An EA-eligible family whose income increases and thereby exceeds this level will remain eligible for shelter benefits for up to 6 months beyond the date at which the income exceeds the standard.

Emergency Assistance (EA) Shelter Program to Non-TAFDC Families: Administered by DHCD, this program provides temporary emergency shelter to income eligible homeless families who are not TAFDC recipients and assists them in finding permanent housing. To be eligible, household gross income is required to be less than or equal to 130% of the federal poverty level, with assets not greater than \$2,500. An EA-eligible family whose income increases and thereby exceeds 130% of federal poverty will remain eligible for shelter benefits for up to 6 months beyond the date at which their income exceeds the standard.

Pre-Employment Services for Homeless TAFDC Families Initiative: Administered by DHCD, the Safe Assistance to Further Economic Empowerment Program (Project SAFE) is designed to help homeless TAFDC recipients achieve economic self-sufficiency. Histories of violence, unsafe home situations, substance abuse, or mental health issues have led to considerable trauma for these families and this program helps participants learn about budgeting, career exploration, safety skills and assertive

communication. The program is trauma informed and designed to help clients develop the confidence and skills necessary to obtain and maintain employment.

Academic Support Services: This program provides targeted academic supports for students that have failed the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) exam, serving high school students and post-twelfth graders who have not earned their competency determination.

Adult Basic Education: Adult Basic Education services help adults attain a higher education degree or permanent employment.

Alternative Education: This program funds academic and enrichment services for youth considered at-risk. These services encourage positive youth development and promote high school graduation.

Child Care for Continuing Education: Former TAFDC recipients, who are not employed and who are completing an education or training program are eligible for child care services from DEEC for up to six months after their TAFDC case closes.

Child Protective Services: The Department of Children and Families (DCF) is responsible for protecting children and strengthening and supporting families. As part of this responsibility, the agency must investigate all reports of child abuse and neglect. Reports are received by the agency, and a social worker is sent to visit the home. Child Protective Services (CPS)/investigations offers an important entry point to an effective continuum of services focused on assisting families so that children can remain in the home.

College Scholarship Programs: College Scholarship Programs provide opportunities for young adults to attend college and to achieve higher education.

Comprehensive Early Childhood Services: Comprehensive Early Childhood Services include mental health services, family support and education, health and dental screenings, home visits, information and referral, and transportation for at-risk children and their families, where parents have income under 125% of the state median income. The goal of this program is to reduce the stresses that may put pressure on family cohesion and to promote the maintenance of families.

Early Childhood Development Program: This program provides early childhood development services for children (between the ages of three and four) of low-income working families with income up to 125% of the State Median Income.

Family Based Services: The Department of Children and Families provides funding to various organizations to operate programs that provide services and assistance to the youth that DCF serves. These expenditures provide additional support ranging from teen health education and pregnancy prevention to parenting programs to alternative educational settings for youth and youth violence prevention, among other supportive services. While offering a range of services, all of the funding aims to foster positive youth development.

HomeBASE Housing Assistance: The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) implemented a housing assistance program called the HomeBASE program. HomeBASE offers time-limited cash payments to families as an alternative to placement in an EA family shelter or a motel. To be eligible for HomeBASE assistance, a family must first be determined EA-eligible by DHCD.

Housing Search and Stabilization and Flex Funds: The Division of Housing Stabilization (DHS), DHCD's newest unit, is charged with the mission of preventing homelessness, sheltering those for whom homelessness is unavoidable, and rapidly re-housing the homeless in stable, permanent housing. DHS's work is guided by the Massachusetts Commission to End Homelessness' Plan to End Homelessness and the Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness.

Lead Agencies: The Lead Agency network was created to serve an important role in the Department of Children and Families' (DCF) community-based service model. The objective is to coordinate the necessary services and supports to the family so that the child is not removed from the home. In the cases where the child is in congregate care placement, the Lead Agency is responsible for coordinating services for the family so that the child can return to the home.

Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program (MEFAP): The Massachusetts Regional Food Bank system purchases food from the state-funded Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program (MEFAP). Food purchased from the program by the food bank system is then distributed at no cost to more than 800 emergency providers. MEFAP, via the food bank system, supplies food to emergency food pantries, soup kitchens and transitional houses and shelters.

Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP): This program provides ongoing rental assistance to low-income families.

Medical Services: This program includes MassHealth benefits for qualified non-citizens

Mentoring Matching Grants: These grants provide mentors for the Learning Achievement for Youth program. They encourage positive youth development and provide after school supervision.

Needs-based Financial Aid Program & Endowment Foundation: The University of Massachusetts provides needs-based financial assistance to Massachusetts students enrolled in and pursuing a program of higher education at one of the UMASS locations: Boston, Lowell, Worcester, Amherst, or Dartmouth. The scholarship program covers the cost of tuition for courses as well as the standard costs associated with attending school. These costs include related expenses such as room and board, health insurance, travel expenses, and personal expenses.

Programs to Eliminate Racial Imbalance – METCO: This program provides transportation to students and additional tuition funds in order to promote a racial balance of the statewide student body. Specialized educational services are provided to a small portion of the population that are not generally available to a majority of students.

Public Housing Operating Subsidy: This program subsidizes the cost of operating state-owned public housing units, which are operated locally by public housing authorities. Only a pro-rata share equal to the subsidies provided to TAFDC recipients may be claimed.

Reach Out and Read: The Reach Out and Read Program is designed to improve parenting skills of the participants in early education and care programs, by providing books to at risk children, promoting family literacy and school readiness.

Recreation and Camping Services: The Recreation and Camping Services Program enhances the educational opportunity and academic achievement for youth in receipt of services from the Department of Children and Families. The Recreation and Camping Program provides the youth of Massachusetts

the opportunity to experience the advantages of participating in recreational and education activities with their peers in racially and ethnically diverse settings, while increasing positive peer interactions and boosting self-esteem.

Referrals to TANF Assistance: The Department of Children and Families (DCF) Random Moment Time Study (RMTS) measures social worker time associated with referring individuals to the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) for public benefits including the state's TANF program, Transitional Aid for Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC).

Safelink Domestic Violence Hotline: The Department of Children and Families (DCF) funds the Safelink Domestic Violence Hotline. The hotline is operated by Casa Myrna Vazquez, Inc. The hotline's objective is to provide an open and consistent response to callers in need of assistance due to domestic violence.

Scholarship Reserve: The Scholarship Reserve provides financial assistance to Massachusetts students enrolled in and pursuing a program of higher education in any approved public or independent college, university, school of nursing, or any other approved institution furnishing a program of higher education. The scholarship program covers the cost of tuition for courses as well as the standard cost of living at the institution. These costs include all related expenses such as room and board, health insurance, travel expenses, personal expenses.

School to Career: This program provides work-based learning services primarily for secondary school students who have not yet passed the MCAS exam. The program is proven effective in transitioning youth from school to work by encouraging positive youth development and achievement through attaining job skills.

State Earned Income Tax Credit: The State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a refundable tax credit that is equal to fifteen percent of the federal earned income tax credit claimed by the filer in the same tax year.

Substitute/Foster Care Services: The Department of Children and Families (DCF) provides foster care services to children when they cannot be cared for in their own home. This assistance is part of a service plan to provide a safe environment for the child, while preparing the family for reunification.

Summer Employment, Seasonal Hiring for the Division of State Parks and the Division of Urban Parks and Recreation: The Department of Conservation and Recreation operates youth employment programs throughout the summer months. The Summer Employment program employs youth to provide peer-led youth recreation and interpretive programs. The programs are aimed at serving underprivileged populations, especially in economic development areas. The summer and seasonal employment services through the Divisions of State Parks and the Division of Urban Parks and Recreation employ individuals to provide services and programs at parks and recreational sites across the state during the peak season.

Support and Stabilization: DCF provides services that strengthen, support and maintain a family's ability to provide a safe and nurturing environment to children and keep them in their own homes when possible. Such services are designed to build upon the existing strengths and resources of family members and to enhance the ability of families to better meet their goals and identified needs.

TAFDC Child Care: Child care services are provided to TAFDC families participating in employment or an approved activity. Services are provided by Department of Early Education and Care (DEEC) as

long as the TAFDC recipients are engaged in approved activities or until they transition from TAFDC. Once a family transitions from TAFDC, the family may be eligible for transitional child care (see below).

Teen Pregnancy Prevention Services: This program provides family planning, outreach and education with a focus on youth between the ages of 10 and 19 who are at high risk for unintended and out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

Transitional, Teen and Income Eligible Child Care: A former TAFDC recipient who is working and whose cash benefits end, and whose income does not exceed 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, is eligible for Transitional Child Care (TCC) for one year from the date the cash assistance ends from the Department of Early Education and Care (DEEC). At the end of the year, if the former recipient is still employed, needs child care, and is financially eligible, the former recipient may continue to receive subsidized Income Eligible Child Care.

Low-income working families who have never received TAFDC assistance and whose income does not exceed 85% of the State Median Income may receive Income Eligible Child Care, if available. Teen parents, whose income does not exceed 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, may receive child care services that provide education and developmental activities for children and allow them to develop their parenting skills while attending school or developing career skills.

Universal Pre-K Program: This program provides expanded access to preschool programs and services to children from the age of 2 years and 9 months until they are kindergarten eligible, through a system of service delivery including public, private non-profit and for-profit preschools, child care centers, nursery schools, preschools operating within public and private schools and school districts.

Workforce Development Grants: The Workforce Development Grants Program provides individual grants on an annual basis to a variety of organizations across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The grant award process and all administrative functions are managed by Executive Office of Labor: Workforce Development (EOLWD). Some of the grants awarded are youth specific and provide job training and enrichment programming to youth.

Youth at Risk Grants: Administered by the Department of Public Health, these grants fund After School Programs which are linked to improved school outcomes, a reduction in drop-out rates and a reduction in out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

Youthbuild: This program provides grants for state-wide Youthbuild-associated programs. Youthbuild programs provide academic remediation, job development and community service skills for disadvantaged youth.

Youth Residential Treatment: Youth Residential Programs provide short-term residential rehabilitative services to youth between the ages of 14 and 18 who need a supervised environment to maintain and solidify their recently acquired sobriety. Services include diagnostic, counseling, educational and pre-vocational, recreational and HIV/AIDS related services. Youth receiving services are high-risk between 14 – 18 years old who are experiencing emotional/behavior, family, developmental and/or social dysfunction as a result of their alcohol and other drug use.

Youth Violence Prevention Program: The Department of Public Health's (DPH) Youth Violence Prevention Program provides at-risk youth with comprehensive out-of-school programming. The grants are geared toward youth in at-risk communities.

YouthWorks Youth Employment Program: YouthWorks is a year-round employment program geared toward at-risk, low-income youth across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The program has broadened its scope over the last few years to provide year-round employment for the youth the program serves. The program serves youth, ages 14-21. The program has increased efforts to serve dropouts and older youth to focus on serving the "disconnected youth" of the state.

(ii) Require a parent or caretaker receiving assistance under the program to engage in work (as defined by the State) once the State determines the parent or caretaker is ready to engage in work, or once the parent or caretaker has received assistance under the program for 24 months (whether or not consecutive), whichever is earlier.

The Department determines an applicant's/recipient's work program status at application, eligibility reviews, and when the individual notifies the Department that his or her circumstances have changed. Individuals who are determined to be nonexempt and whose children are aged 2 or older must comply with the work program provisions required by 106 CMR 203.400(A)(2). The Department's current regulations regarding the work program can be found at 106 CMR 203.400 and the current regulations regarding exemptions can be found at 203.100. The regulations include, under State option, exemptions for certain single custodial parents who are caring for children under the age of two (which encompasses the federal option to exempt parents with children under the age of one). In addition, if a single custodial parent caring for a child under six is required to work under the State's regulations, and such parent has demonstrated an inability to locate child care for the reasons specified in Section 407(e)(2), such parent is not sanctioned for failing to participate in the work program.

(iii) Ensure that parents and caretakers receiving assistance under the program engage in work activities in accordance with section 407.

Nonexempt parents/caretakers who fail to meet work program requirements under 106 CMR 203.400(A) or to substitute work hours with education and/or training that meets the work program requirements, are mandated to participate in community service. Once mandated, a nonexempt parent/caretaker who fails to work, participate in education and/or training or perform community service for the required minimum number of hours per week, is ineligible for cash assistance. Repeated failure to work or participate in education and/or training, or community service once mandated to do so, results in termination of assistance for the entire household. Recipients must verify their compliance with the work program requirement on a regular basis, and their participation status is tracked on the Department's automated system. Current regulations pertaining to work program sanctions and good cause for failure to comply with such requirements can be found at 106 CMR 207.200 et. seq.

The minimum number of hours of participation required for recipients, and the penalties for failing to comply with the participation requirement were established by Chapter 5, of the Acts of 1995, as amended.

(iv) Take such reasonable steps as the State deems necessary to restrict the use and disclosure of information about individuals and families receiving assistance under the program attributable to funds provided by the Federal Government.

The State restricts the use/disclosure of confidential information. Current regulations regarding these restrictions can be found at 106 CMR 100 through 108: Fair Information Practices. Furthermore, Governor Patrick issued Executive Order 504 on September 19, 2008 which added additional safeguards against the disclosure of a client's confidential information.

(v) Establish goals and take action to prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies, with special emphasis on teenage pregnancies, and establish numerical goals for reducing the illegitimacy ratio of the State (as defined in section 403(a)(2)) for calendar years 1996 - 2005.

Massachusetts historically has had one of the lowest teen birth rates in the country. In 1996, there were 5,758 births in Massachusetts to women between the ages of 15 through 19, representing 28.5 per 1,000 females in that age range. In 2009, the number dropped to 4477, representing 19.5 per 1,000 females in that age range.

Although the Massachusetts teen birth rate is low compared to the national rate of 41.9 per 1,000 women in the 15-19 age range, the number of teens giving birth who are unmarried remains high. In 2008, 93.8% teen births were to teens who were unmarried.

In order to reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock births, the Department of Transitional Assistance works with the state Department of Public Health (DPH). DPH coordinates family planning and teen pregnancy prevention efforts throughout the Commonwealth. In addition, DPH works with local schools (K-12) to develop sex and health education curricula that incorporate pregnancy prevention efforts.

(vi) Conduct a program designed to reach State and local law enforcement officials, the education system, and relevant counseling services, that provides education and training on the problem of statutory rape so that teenage pregnancy prevention programs may be expanded in scope to include men.

Beginning in 1996, the Department of State Police (DSP) began to focus on and increase prosecution under Massachusetts' statutory rape law. Toward this end, DSP increased its investigation and education resources aimed at improving the effectiveness of the prosecution and prevention of these crimes.

The State Police Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Unit conducted classes that encompassed the issue of teen dating violence, including statutory rape. The Unit trained middle and high school students, teachers, counselors, health care workers, state employees, and state and local police officers. The curriculum included an increased emphasis on statutory rape to enable the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Unit to effectively bring the importance of this message to trainees. The Department of Transitional Assistance worked with this Unit, and with the state Department of Public Health's pregnancy prevention program staff to maximize the educational efforts relating to both male and female clients regarding statutory rape. These efforts are ongoing.

A subcommittee of the Governor's Commission on Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence also addressed this issue. Staff from the Department of Transitional Assistance, the nonprofit Alliance for Young Families, the Department of Social Services, the Department of Public Health, the Department of Education, Sexual Assault and Rape Crisis Centers, Planned Parenthood and the District Attorney's Association were included on this subcommittee.

(B) Special Provisions

(i) Indicate whether the State intends to treat families moving into the State from another State differently than other families under the program, and if so, how the State intends to treat such families under the program.

The State has not elected to implement this option at this time.

(ii) Indicate whether the State intends to provide assistance under the program to individuals who are not citizens of the U.S., and if so, an overview of such assistance.

Only non-citizens who are eligible under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) receive TAFDC benefits, which are funded with state and/or federal funds.

(iii) Set forth objective criteria for the delivery of benefits and the determination of eligibility, and for fair and equitable treatment, including an explanation of how the State will provide opportunities for recipients who have been adversely affected to be heard in a State administrative or appeal process.

Benefits are provided to eligible applicants and recipients on a statewide basis. The standards for determining eligibility and the amount of assistance are established on an objective and equitable basis in accordance with the Department's regulations. These standards are based on an individual's income, assets, family size and circumstances. All Department activities are conducted in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, and the Massachusetts Constitution. The Department does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, handicap or age in admission or access to, or treatment or employment in, its programs or activities. An applicant/recipient has a right to a fair hearing as set forth in the Department's current regulations at 106 CMR 343.000 et. seq.

All benefits to which recipients are eligible are provided with reasonable promptness in accordance with timeliness standards that are included in the Department's regulations. The Department's current timeliness standards can be found at 106 CMR 701.500 - 701.530 and 702.160 - 702.180.

(iv) Not later than one year after the date of enactment of the Act, unless the chief executive officer of the State opts out of this provision by notifying the Secretary, a State shall, consistent with the exception provided in section 407(e)(2), require a parent or caretaker receiving assistance under the program who, after receiving assistance for two months is not exempt from work requirements and is not engaged in work, as determined under section 407(c), to participate in community service or employment, with minimum hours per week and tasks to be determined by the State.

As noted in section (i) above, if a parent/caretaker is not exempt from the work program requirement as defined by the State, and has received assistance for sixty days, and he or she is not working or substituting work hours with education and/or training, he or she will be required to participate in community service (or a combination of work and community service) for the hours per week that

ensures his or her compliance with 106 CMR 203.400(A). This requirement may be waived for victims of domestic violence according to 106 CMR 203.110.

OPTIONAL PROVISIONS

The State provides the following information regarding *optional* provisions under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act:

Title I, Section 404 Use of Grants

(c) AUTHORITY TO TREAT INTERSTATE IMMIGRANTS UNDER RULES OF FORMER STATE

A State operating a program funded under this part may apply to a family the rules (including benefit amounts) of the program funded under this part of another State if the family has moved to the State from the other State and has resided in the State for less than 12 months.

The State has not elected to implement this option at this time.

Title I, Section 404 Use of Grants

(f) AUTHORITY TO OPERATE EMPLOYMENT PLACEMENT PROGRAM

A State to which a grant is made under section 403 may use the grant to make payments (or provide job placement vouchers) to State-approved public and private job placement agencies that provide employment placement services to individuals who receive assistance under the State program funded under this part.

The State uses its grant to make payments to State-approved placement agencies, as it deems appropriate. Effective January 1, 2010, the State began to purchase such services, aimed at assisting recipients to obtain employment, through the workforce development system.

Title I, Section 404 Use of Grants

(j) REQUIREMENT FOR HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR EQUIVALENT

A State to which a grant is made under section 403 shall not be prohibited from sanctioning a family that includes an adult who is older than age 20 and younger than age 51 and who has received assistance under any State program funded under this part attributable to funds provided by the Federal Government or under the SNAP program, as defined in section 3(h) of the Food Stamp Act of 1977, if such adult does not have, or is not working toward attaining, a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent unless such adult has been determined in the judgment of medical, psychiatric, or other appropriate professionals to lack the requisite capacity to complete successfully a course of study that would lead to a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent.

The State has not elected to sanction such individuals at this time.

Title I, Section 404 Use of Grants

(h) USE OF FUNDS FOR INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNTS

A State to which a grant is made under section 403 may use the grant to carry out a program to fund individual development accounts (as defined in paragraph (2)) established by individuals eligible for assistance under the State program funded under this part.

DTA allows eligible persons to participate in IDA programs. The IDA program helps eligible TAFDC clients accumulate savings to be used for certain vocational educational training

Title I, Section 407(b)(5) State Option for Participation Requirements

For any fiscal year, a State may at its option, not require an individual who is a single custodial parent caring for a child who has not attained 12 months of age to engage in work, and may disregard such an individual in determining the participation rates under subsection (a) for not more than 12 months.

The State has elected to implement this option, with certain exceptions. Current regulations governing the work program requirement can be found at 106 CMR 203.400.

Title I, Section 408 Prohibitions: Requirements

(a)(7) No Assistance for More than 5 Years

(C) Hardship Exception (i) In General

The State may exempt a family from the application of subparagraph (A) by reason of hardship or if the family includes an individual who has been battered or subjected to extreme cruelty.

The State excludes from its time limit those individuals who have been determined to meet the Department's exemption criteria. Such exemptions can currently be found at 106 CMR 203.100. In addition, exceptions and waivers of the time limit may be granted at the discretion of the Department for reasons that may include domestic violence and/or hardship. Such extensions and waivers can currently be found at 106 CMR 203.110 and 210.

Title I, Section 408 Prohibitions: Requirements

(a)(10) DENIAL OF ASSISTANCE FOR MINOR CHILDREN WHO ARE ABSENT FROM THE HOME FOR A SIGNIFICANT PERIOD

(A) GENERAL

A State to which a grant is made under section 403 shall not use any part of the grant to provide assistance for a minor child who has been, or is expected by a parent (or other caretaker relative) of the child to be, absent from the home for a period of 45 consecutive days, or at the option of the State, such period of not less than 30 and not more than 180 consecutive days as the State may provide for in the State plan submitted pursuant to section 402.

In order to receive assistance, a child may not be absent from the home for more than 120 consecutive days, without good cause. This regulation, and the definition of good cause can be found at 106 CMR 203.595.

Title I, Section 408 Prohibitions: Requirements

(a)(10) DENIAL OF ASSISTANCE FOR MINOR CHILDREN WHO ARE ABSENT FROM THE HOME FOR A SIGNIFICANT PERIOD

(B) STATE AUTHORITY TO ESTABLISH GOOD CAUSE EXCEPTIONS

The State may establish such good cause exceptions to subparagraph (A) as the State considers appropriate if such exceptions are provided for in the State plan submitted pursuant to section 402.

The Commonwealth defines good cause as hospitalization of the minor child, attendance at a residential school or absence due to a family crisis situation that is temporary in nature. The definition of good cause can be found at 106 CMR 203.595.

Title I, Section 408 Prohibitions:: Requirements

(b) INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY PLANS

(2) (A) IN GENERAL

On the basis of the assessment made under subsection (a) with respect to an individual, the State agency, in consultation with the individual, may develop an individual responsibility plan.

The State does develop individual Employment Development Plans (EDPs) in conjunction with recipients. An EDP identifies the recipient's employment-related goals and the supportive services that will be provided to assist the recipient in meeting these goals. The regulation implementing EDP's can be found a 106 CMR 207.110.

Title I, Section 408 Prohibitions: Requirements

(b) INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY PLANS

(2) (B) TIMING

The State agency may comply with paragraph (1) with respect to an individual: i) within 90 days (or at the option of the State, 180 days) after the effective date of this part, in the case of an individual who, as of such effective date, is a recipient of aid under the State plan approved under part A (as in effect immediately before such effective date); or ii) within 30 days (or, at the option of the State, 90 days) after the individual is determined to be eligible for such assistance, in the case of any other individual.

As required, the Department conducts initial assessments of applicants and recipients who are 18 years of age or older, have not completed high school or obtained a GED and are not attending secondary school. Assessments were completed within 180 days for individuals who were receiving assistance prior to enactment of the Act; and within 90 days for individuals who began receiving assistance after enactment of the Act.

Title I, Section 114 Assuring Medicaid Coverage for Low-Income Families

(b)(3) OPTION TO TERMINATE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE FOR FAILURE TO MEET WORK REQUIREMENT (A) INDIVIDUALS RECEIVING CASH ASSISTANCE UNDER TANF

In the case of an individual who: (i) is receiving cash assistance under a State program funded under part A of title IV; (ii) is eligible for medical assistance under this title on a basis not related to section 1902(1); and (iii) has the cash assistance under such program terminated pursuant to 407(e)(1)(B) (as in effect on or after the welfare reform effective date) because of refusing to work, the State may terminate such individual's eligibility for medical assistance under this title until

such time as there no longer is a basis for the termination of such cash assistance because of such refusal.

The State has not elected to implement this option at this time.

Title I Section 115 Denial of Assistance and Benefits for Certain Drug-Related Convictions

(d)(1)(A) Opt Out. A State may, by specific reference in a law enacted after the date of the enactment of this Act, exempt any or all individuals domiciled in the State from the application of subsection (a).

(B) Limit Period of Prohibition

A State may, by law enacted after the date of the enactment of this Act, limit the period for which subsection (a) shall apply to any or all individuals domiciled in the State.

The State has decided to exempt individuals from the eligibility restrictions of Title I Section 115(d)(1) with the exception that incarcerated individuals described in that section, shall not be eligible for TAFDC cash assistance during the first 12 months after release from a correctional institution unless exemptions under 106 CMR 203.100 are applicable, or the individual qualifies for a domestic violence waiver.